

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76 By J. Edward Leithead

From earliest dime novel days, stories of the American Revolution were popular, also biographies of important figures in the War of Independence, such as The Life of George Washington, The Life of Anthony Wayne, The Life of Israel Putnam, The Life of Ethan Allen and others published in Beadle's Lives of Great Americans. They were ALL important figures, come to that, from the epauleted officer to the man in the ranks, who sweated or shivered through the changing seasons of the long-drawn-out fight for freedom, ready with his flintlock to give the best he had until Yorktown brought success to the banners of the Continental Army.

Many black-and-white dime and nickel libraries printing a variety of stories had numerous tales of the Revolutionary War. While not attempting a complete list, I will mention the following in Beadle's Pocket Novels: The Patriot Scouts, or, The Green Mountain Boys; The Sons of Liberty, or, The Maid of Tryon; in Beadle's Dime Novels: The Schuylkill Rangers, or, The Bride of Valley Forge; The Maid of Esopus, or, The Trials and Triumphs of the Revolution; Hearts Forever, or, The Old Dominion Battle Grounds; in Beadle's New Dime Novels: The Masked Spy, or, The Wild Rider of the Hills; Sumter's Scouts; A Romance of the Revolution; The Quakeress Spy. A Romance of 1780; in Beadle's American Tales: Giant Jake, the Patrol of the Mountain; in Frank Starr's American Novels: Thayendanegea, the Terror, or, The War-Eagle of the Mohawks; in the Army and Navy Library: Guerrillas and Regulars, or, The Cost of Independence; Luke, the Partisan, or, The Siege of Ninety-six; The Massacre of Wyoming, or, The Brigands of the Revolution; in The Camp-fire Library: The Flying Fish, or, Running the Blockade of Boston Harbor, The Patriot Cruiser, or, Mystery of the Three-masted Schooner; Sons of Liberty, or, The Cruise for the Powder Ship, The Yankee Partisan, or, Patriot Rangers of the Brandywine, Green Mountain Boys, or, The Spy of the Winooski; The Rebel Spy, or, Free Rangers of the Revolution; The Yankee Privateer, or, Cruising for British Prizes; Rebel Cruiser, or, The Blue-Jackets of Seventy-six; in Munro's 10¢ Novels (reprinted in Beadle's Frontier Series): Mad Anthony's Captain, The Wooden-legged Spy, The Indian Queen's Revenge.

When the colored cover era of novels arrived, forty or more stories of the American Revolution appeared in Tousey's Pluck and Luck weekly (of this number some were printed twice). Their titles and covers were more than enough to stir the interest of most novel readers—Fighting With Washington, The Bullet Charmer, Arnold's Shadow, Moll Pitcher's Boy, Mad Anthony Wayne, the Hero of Stony Point, Old Putnam's Pet, The Scouts of the Santee, Gallant Jack Barry, the Young Father of the American Navy, Percy Greville, the Scout of Valley Forge, The Quaker Boy Spy, Little Lou, the

Pride of the Continental Army, etc. Street and Smith published Boys of Liberty Library, a thick-book type of novel, and included some twenty-eight Revolutionary War stories in Brave and Bold weekly—Nick o' the Night, or, The Boy Spy of '76; The Black Rider, or, Burgoyne's Terrible Foe; The Boys of Liberty, or, The Adventures of Paul Revere, etc. The Paul Jones Weekly was another Street & Smith publication of some nineteen issues.

The Revolutionary War tale really came into its own with the publication of the first number of The Liberty Boys of '76, A Weekly Magazine Containing Stories of the American Revolution, January 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey. The reason for its long-time popularity—it ceased publication with #1273, in May, 1925, which includes reprinting of the series, the original stories numbering 612—is not hard to discover. It was American history in story and picture, the action centering, as the publisher's blurb put it, in "a brave band of American youths who were always ready and willing to imperil their lives for the sake of helping along the gallant cause of independence."

There were about one hundred of these Liberty Boys, who, suffering casualties, were always able to fill up their ranks with new recruits, though the latter had to pass a rigid test. Dick Slater was captain of the band and knew that the effectiveness of such a small force lay in its mobility and quick striking power. The Liberty Boys were a stabbing sword in the sides of the British, Hessians and Tories, and a counter-threat to the Indians menacing the frontier, hard-held by the pioneers of Daniel Boone's day. They couldn't expect much help from the Continental Army, these frontier folk, for the men under Washington and his generals were locked in a death struggle with the British from New England to Georgia. But the Liberty Boys, fast-moving, hard-fighting, appeared in the nick of time at more than one danger point far removed from battling armies, to halt the destruction wrought by tomahawk, scalping-knife and firebrand. On the covers, coonskin-capped, buck-skin-clad frontiersmen fought redskins side by side with Dick Slater and his Liberty Boys.

The whole period of the Revolutionary War was covered in this weekly, with fact and fiction well handled, each story complete in an issue and the scene shifting back and forth in war-torn areas as was necessary in such a long series. The pseudonym "Harry Moore" signed to these tales was in reality two different writers. For about two hundred issues, the stories were authored by S. A. D. Cox, then Cecil Burleigh took over the writing of them. Here is a sample of Burleigh's work, which serves to introduce Captain Dick Slater and his staff (from #387, The Liberty Boys and DeKalb, or, Dick Slater's Last Bullet):

"There were a half dozen boys in Continental uniform making their way along a rough country road near Sander's Creek, a few miles from Camden, South Carolina, one pleasant day in August.

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"At that time the British under Lord Cornwallis were harassing the Carolinas, Camden being held by Lord Rawdon, while Tarleton, Webster and others were roaming the country, carrying desolation wherever they went.

"General Horatio Gates, seconded by the Baron DeKalb, was at this time on his way to oppose Cornwallis and try and wrest Camden from Rawdon. Already within a few miles of Camden and awaiting the arrival of Gates and DeKalb was a band of one hundred young patriots, known as the Liberty Boys. They had been fighting for freedom for some years and were like veterans.

"The boys riding along the road were Dick Slater, captain; Bob Estabrook, first lieutenant, and Mark Morrison, second lieutenant, and Jack Warren, Ben Spurlock and Sam Sanderson, all Liberty Boys.

"Their camp was a few miles away, in a swamp, and they were out reconnoitering. Dick Slater rode a handsome black Arabian, Bob a bay, and Mark a big gray, the others being well mounted, Jack in particular, his mount being a beautiful bay mare, almost as speedy as Major, Dick's black.

"The six boys were riding along at an easy gait, chatting gaily, when they came to a neat log cabin by the side of the road. A young girl was sitting on the doorstep and, as the boys approached, she arose and came forward.

"'I'm glad to see you,' she said. 'I think that uniform is the handsomest in the whole world.' 'Then you are a good patroit,' answered Dick Slater, smiling."

The young lady was right. The blue and buff uniform of the Continental Army, with tricorne and gay cockade to top it off, was one of the most colorful ever worn by soldiers anywhere in any age. It showed up well on the fine covers of the Liberty Boys of '76, contrasting with the red of the British uniform, and it is unfortunate that the name of the artist, who, week after week, produced such vivid scenes of the Revolutionary War period, has thus far never come to light. Most of the handsome colored covers were of battle scenes or skirmishes, of course, the Liberty Boys against the lobsterbacks or against the redskins. Fights on land and water, in swamps, in the woods and in stockade forts. A few were scenes of less violence, in camp and colonial town, but interesting and with careful attention to detail. Historical characters, particularly General Washington, looked like themselves. As depicted in the very earliest issues, the Liberty Boys were a little too youthfullooking and not drawn by the artist I have in mind. When he assumed what must have been the terrific task of producing a half dozen or more excellent cover illustrations for Tousey publications per week, he turned Dick Slater and his band into believable young veterans of Washington's army.

The six mentioned in the excerpt from The Liberty Boys and DeKalb lasted throughout the series, and there were two other Liberty Boys who were never among the missing, affording a little comedy to offset the grimness of

the fighting-Patsy Brannigan and Carl Gookenspiller.

Famous names in American history crowded the pages of the Liberty Boys of '76. Whom do you wish to meet? His Excellency, General Washington? There were many issues in which he personally appeared, on the cover as well as in the text. He is shown reviewing the newly formed band of Liberty Boys in the very first issue—#1, The Liberty Boys of '76, or, Fighting for Freedom. He is also in the following: #3—The Liberty Boys' Good Work, or, Helping General Washington. #28—The Liberty Boys' Battle Cry, or, With Washington at the Brandywine. #126—The Liberty Boys' Bugle Call, or, The Plot to Poison Washington. #165—The Liberty Boys in Camp, or, Working for Washington. #203—The Liberty Boys With Washington, or, Hard Times at Valley Forge. (There were numerous stories with the scene laid at Valley Forge, the last being #572, The Liberty Boys Tricking the Red-

coats, or, The Gunsmith of Valley Forge. Snow and freezing cold were the background for most of the covers to remind you of the hardships undergone by the Continental Army that terrible winter of long ago, when the Baron von Steuben took the opportunity to drill the men with excellent results). #222—The Liberty Boys at Princeton, or, Washington's Narrow Escape; #301—The Liberty Boys as Cavalry Scouts, or, The Charge of Washington's Brigade; #414—The Liberty Boys and the Wicked Six, or The Plan to Kidnap Washington; #547—The Liberty Boys' Prisoner of War, or, Acting as Aids to Washington; #465—The Liberty Boys' Call to Arms, or, Washington's Clever Ruse; #492—The Liberty Boys Guarding Washington, or, Defeating a British Plot; #609—The Liberty Boys Helping Washington, or, Great Work at White Marsh.

Dick Slater, at times, served as a spy for General Washington, who called him affectionately by his first name. Sometimes Dick was disguised as a farmer in homespun or a Tory in a greatcoat, his missions taking him into towns with cobbled streets and picturesque colonial dwellings or taverns, all

faithfully portrayed by the artist.

Should you want to meet General "Mad Anthony" Wayne, that very able, courageous and well-dressed general of the Pennsylvania Line, refer to #58, The Liberty Boys' Desperate Charge, or, With "Mad Anthony" at Stony Point, #179, The Liberty Boys and the Gun Maker, or, The Battle of Stony Point, #220, The Liberty Boys and the Mutineers, or, Helping "Mad Anthony," #290, The Liberty Boys' Deadshot Band, or, General Wayne and the Mutineers, #300, The Liberty Boys With Wayne, or, Daring Deeds at Stony Point. Of course, in the series, General Wayne is also referred to in the fighting at the Brandywine and Germantown and other notable battles.

Dick Slater and his Liberty Boys accompanied Colonel George Rogers Clark on his amazing marches in #221, The Liberty Boys Out West, or, The Capture of Vincennes, and #485, The Liberty Boys in the Drowned Lands, or,

Perilous Times Out West.

They fought beside the Marquis de Lafayette in #160, The Liberty Boys and Lafayette, or, Helping the Young French General, and #352, The Liberty Boys on Barren Hill, or, Fighting With Lafayette. And with Count Rochambeau in #295, The Liberty Boys and Rochambeau, or, Fighting With French Allies. Likewise with Thaddeus Kosciusko in #195, The Liberty Boys and Kosciusko, or, The Fight at Great Falls, and Count Pulaski in #209, The Liberty Boys and Pulaski, or, The Polish Patriot.

General Israel Putnam, who had seen service in the French and Indian War, came again to the front in the Revolution and appeared in #125, The Liberty Boys and "Old Put", or, The Escape at Horseneck, #297, The Liberty Boys With Putnam, or, Good Work in the Nutmeg State, #392, The Liberty Boys Flanking the Enemy, or, Putnam's Clever Ruse and #560, The Liberty

Boys Holding the Pass, or, The Escape of General Putnam.

A gallant Virginia cavalryman was Colonel Harry Lee, famed as "Light Horse Harry," and the father of Robert E. Lee, equally famous, and the Liberty Boys rode with the colonel in #62, The Liberty Boys' Daring Stroke, or, With "Light Horse Harry" at Paulus Hook, in #164, The Liberty Boys and "Light Horse Harry," or, Chasing the British Dragoons, and #516, The Liberty Boys and the Black Giant, or, Helping "Light Horse Harry."

General Nathanael Greene, the blacksmith who became one of Washington's ablest generals, is a prominent figure in #140, The Liberty Boys and General Greene, or, Chasing Cornwallis and #396, The Liberty Boys' Rear-Guard, or, Covering Greene's Retreat. General Greene and General Horatio Gates saw considerable action in the South during the Revolution. Gates, who had triumphed over British arms at Saratoga, was badly defeated at Cam-

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den. One error, perhaps, was his refusal to use the cavalry of Generals Francis Marion and Thomas Sumter. It is all set forth in #168, The Liberty Boys and General Gates, or, The Disaster at Camden and #212, The Liberty Boys at Sanders' Creek, or, The Error of General Gates.

General Francis Marion, the "Swamp Fox"—there was a romantic cavalry leader, living in swampland hideaways, charging out to strike the redcoats when they least expected it and beating a retreat before they could surround him with their superior numbers. But he had many a narrow escape from capture. The Santee, the Pedee and Snow's Island are names which conjure up his daring deeds, recorded in #130, The Liberty Boys With the "Swamp Fox," or, Helping Marion, #210, The Liberty Boys on the Pedee, or, Maneuvering With Marion, #346, The Liberty Boys on Special Duty, or, Out With Marion's Swamp Foxes, #377, The Liberty Boys in the Swamp, or, Fighting Along the Santee, #521, The Liberty Boys' Island Retreat, or, Fighting With the Swamp Fox, #553, The Liberty Boys' Swamp Angels, or, Out With Marion and His Men, #611, The Liberty Boys in Frog Swamp, or, General Marion's Daring Deed.

Another romantic figure among a host of them was General Daniel Morgan, Virginia rifleman, who made his presence sharply felt at numberless battles of the Revolution and was one of the few to thrash Tarleton's dragoons, led by Colonel Banastre Tarleton himself. You may read about Morgan in #137, The Liberty Boys' "Minute Men," or, The Battle of the Cow Pens and #548, The Liberty Boys With Morgan's Riflemen, or, Dick Slater's Best Shot.

General Benedict Arnold, who permitted his resentments to over-ride him, fighting bravely for the American cause in the beginning—he led the celebrated march to Quebec, helped defeat Burgoyne at Saratoga—and later attempted to sell out to the British at West Point, appeared in several issues: #141, The Liberty Boys in Richmond, or, Fighting Traitor Arnold, #246, The Liberty Boys and Benedict Arnold, or, Hot Work With a Traitor and #457, The Liberty Boys Up North, or, With Arnold on Lake Champlain. The latter story is about Arnold when he was still a trusted general of the American military forces.

Another issue concerns the ill-fated messenger between Arnold and the British general, Sir Henry Clinton—#183, The Liberty Boys and Major Andre, or, Trapping the British Messenger. Major John Andre, said to have been an engaging sort of man, talked himself into a hangnoose when fooled by the fact that a member of the patrol that captured him, John Paulding, American militiaman, happened to be wearing a discarded Hessian coat.

General John Stark is famous in Revolutionary War records and not forgotten in the Liberty Boys of '76; you meet him in #328, The Liberty Boys With General Stark, or, Helping the Green Mountain Boys, and #473, The Liberty Boys Defending Bennington, or, Helping General Stark. And you'll find General Philip Schuyler in #199, The Liberty Boys at Albany, or, Saving General Schuyler; and General Nicholas Herkimer, of Mohawk Valley fame, in #292, The Liberty Boys Out With Herkimer, or, Fighting the Battle of Oriskany. The famous leader of the Green Mountain Boys at the taking of Fort Ticonderoga is in #131, The Liberty Boys and Ethan Allen, or, Old and Young Veterans, and the patriot who uttered the deathless words, "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country," at the foot of the gallows, is in #136, The Liberty Boys and Nathan Hale, or, The Brave Patriot Spy.

Proving that the Liberty Boys occasionally fought on water as well as land, there were #134, The Liberty Boys and Paul Jones, or, The Martyrs of the Prison Ships, #189, The Liberty Boys Afloat, or, Sailing with Paul

Jones, #370, The Liberty Boys in Irons, or, Caught on a Prison Ship, #442, The Liberty Boys and the Middy, or, Dick Slater's Escape from the Fleet and #467, The Liberty Boys Out With Brave Barry, or, The Battle With the "Unicorn."

It is a curious thing that an historical figure who gained prominence at the beginning of the Revolutionary War doesn't appear in the titles of the weekly until the series has almost run its course—The Liberty Boys and Paul Revere, or, A Wild Ride for Freedom is #606.

Remarkable women of the Revolution are in the pages of the Liberty Boys of '76, too. Molly Pitcher, tirelessly bringing water to the wounded at the battle of Monmouth and serving the gun at which her husband, John Hayes, was shot down, thus winning the rank of sergeant from General Washington, is in #293, The Liberty Boys and Moll Pitcher, or, The Brave Woman Gunner. Other heroines have issues devoted to them: Lydia Darrah, Rebecca Mottes, Jane McCrea, Flora McDonald.

Of important military figiures in the opposing force we meet General William Howe, Sir Henry Clinton, Colonel Tarleton, the "Butcher," Lord Cornwallis, General Johnny Burgoyne, Colonel Barry St. Leger, General Knyp-

hausen, the Hessian, Major Ferguson and many others.

What battles of the American Revolution are you interested in reading about? The siege of Boston, Harlem Heights, Stony Point, Trenton, Princeton, the Brandywine, Germantown, Bennington, Saratoga, Sag Harbor, Long Island, the Highland Forts, Monmouth, Hackensack, Oriskany, Barren Hill, White Marsh, Fort Washington, Cowpens, Hobkirk's Hill, Guilford Courthouse, Charleston Harbor, Camden, King's Mountain, Yorktown? Take your pick—all and more are described in the Liberty Boys of '76. Any student of the War of the Revolution could peruse the series with profit. In writing these stories, Cecil Burleigh, and perhaps S. A. D. Cox as well, drew on excellent source material, B. J. Lossing's "Field Book of the Revolution."

The Indian frontier, as I have said earlier in this article, received its full share of attention from the authors of the Liberty Boys of '76. In the main, Dick Slater and his band were pitted against one or another tribe of the Six Nations or Iroquois League, who probably didn't need much urging by the British to attack settlers all along the northern frontier. The nations represented were the Mohawks, Senecas, Oneidas, Cayugas, Tuscaroras and Onondagas. Westward it was the Shawnees, Miamis, Ottawas, in the south, the Cherokees and other tribes.

#158, The Liberty Boys Against the Red Demons, or, Fighting the Indian Raiders, was a good one. Another was #190, The Liberty Boys in Mohawk Valley, or, Fighting Redcoats, Tories and Indians. #204 was The Liberty Boys After Brant, or, Chasing the Indian Raiders. Chief Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea), white mixed with his Mohawk blood, was a great figure of an Indian, who appeared in later issues—#383, The Liberty Boys at Cherry Valley, or, Battling With Brant, #427, The Liberty Boys and the Mohawk Chief, or, After St. Leger's Indians, #583, The Liberty Boys Tracking Brant, or, After the Mohawk Raiders.

We also meet many famous frontiersmen and infamous renegades. Simon Kenton, for instance, in #287. The Liberty Boys and Simon Kenton, or, Fighting the British on the Ohio; and Daniel Boone in #309, The Liberty Boys With Daniel Boone, or, The Battle of Blue Licks. Simon Girty, the renegade, appears in #327, The Liberty Boys After Simon Girty, or, Chasing a Renegade, and #600, The Liberty Boys at the Block House, or, Holding Back Simon Girty.

Other notable stories of Indian-fighting during the Revolution—sometimes with the redskins as allies of the British, Tories or just plain no-good

white renegades-are #127, The Liberty Boys and "Queen Esther," or, The Wyoming Valley Massacre (Catharine Montour, of French and Indian parentage, and called "Queen Esther," yielded to the call of her wild blood and joined the Iroquois, becoming a tomahawking fiend at Wyoming), #276, The Liberty Boys and General Pickens, or, Chastising the Cherokees, #317, The Liberty Boys at Fort Herkimer, or, Out Against the Redskins, #332, The Liberty Boys on the Ohio, or, After the Redskins, #345, The Liberty Boys After Logan, or, The Raid of the Mingo Indians, #358, The Liberty Boys' War Trail, or, Hunting Down the Redskins, #416, The Liberty Boys' Indian Runner, or, Thrashing the Red Raiders, #419, The Liberty Boys in Wyoming Valley, or, Dick Slater's Narrowest Escape, #440, The Liberty Boys and "Red Fox," or, Out With the Indian Fighters, #445, The Liberty Boys' Redskin Foe, or, The Battle in the Woods, #459, The Liberty Boys in Kentucky, or, After the Redskins and Renegades, #475, The Liberty Boys and the Indian Fighter, or, Saving the Southern Settlers, #482, The Liberty Boys After the Cherokees, or, Battling With Cruel Enemies, #513, The Liberty Boys on the Wallkill, or, The Minisink Massacre, #531, The Liberty Boys and the Indian Queen, or Dick Slater's Close Call.

Here is Cecil Burleigh writing about Indian fighting in #317, The Lib-

erty Boys at Fort Herkimer, or, Out Against the Redskins:

"A boy and a girl of about sixteen years were running across a little clearing toward a log cabin at the further end. Two or three Indians were hotly pursuing them, tomahawks in hand, poised ready to throw.

"The time was the summer of the year 1778. The place was the woods not far from that ten-mile stretch of rich alluvial land lying on both sides of

the Mohawk River, known as German Flats.

"Here a prosperous settlement had been established, with one or two churches, a schoolhouse and two forts. One of these latter, built around the old stone mansion of the Herkimer family and stockaded, was known as Fort Herkimer and was often used as a place of refuge for the neighboring settlers against marauding Indians and lawless Tories who often joined the savages against the patriots.

"Beyond German Flats, to the west, along the river, were here and there isolated log cabins, with little clearings about them. It was to one of these that the boy and girl were fleeing on that hot summer day in 1778. (Author's Note: Burleigh and Cox always gave complete historical backgrounds for their tales, so that you're never in doubt where and when the events took

place).

"The Indians, apparently sure of overtaking the fugitives, forbore to throw their tomahawks, already poised for that purpose... They were within twenty paces of the cabin when a woman came to the door with an old flintlock musket in her hand.

"As she appeared, one of the redskins paused and drew back his arm to get a surer cast with his tomahawk. In another instant it would have left his hand, flying straight for the boy's head. Then a sharp report sounded, like the crack of a whip, and a puff of smoke was seen at one side of the clearing. The Indian fell where he stood in a heap, his tomahawk dropping from his hand.

"The shot had not begun to echo through the woods when another was heard. The nearest Indian, running at full speed and about to hurl his tomahawk, received the heavy bullet in the neck. He plunged forward, fairly driving his head into the earth and falling all in a heap. There was only one Indian remaining now, and he received the shot from the woman's trusty old flintlock, as he paused upon witnessing the sudden death of his companions.

"The boy and the girl ran breathlessly into the log cabin and then a boy

in Continental uniform, mounted on a splendid coal black horse, rode into the clearing.

"'We had better get rid of those bodies, ma'am,' he said, 'before any

other redskins chance to see them.'

"I reckon you're right,' said the woman, who was strong and muscular from hard work and bronzed from exposure to the sun and air.

"The boy sprang from his horse, took hold of one of the dead redskins

by the feet and proceeded to drag him into the thicket.

"'I reckon you shot the first two o' these varmints,' the woman said, seizing the second body.

"'Yes,' said the boy quietly.

"The settler's boy now came out of the log cabin to dispose of the third body.

"'Aren't you Dick Slater, cap'n o' the Liberty Boys?' he asked.

"'What makes you think so?' asked the other, depositing the dead Indian in a hole caused by pulling out a stump and kicking a lot of dry leaves over it.

"'Why, when I was down to Fort Herkimer t'other day I seen you with the rest o' the Liberty Boys, and they called you Dick Slater. I couldn't forget that black hoss nohow.'"

I have reserved for the last mention of the issues of the Liberty Boys of '76 containing stories about Yorktown, which brought the Revolutionary War to a close—they were #133, The Liberty Boys' Bayonet Charge, or, The Siege of Yorktown, and #540, The Liberty Boys' Best Battle, or, The Surrender of Cornwallis.

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